

GROWERS CAN REDUCE WASTES BY SHIPPING NO BAD POTATOES

Department of Agriculture Finds That Producers as Well as Dealers and Railroads Must Share Blame for Loss; Serious Damage from Careless Handling.

Much of the loss in marketing potatoes due to shipping ungraded, carelessly handled, diseased stock can be eliminated by the grower with a resultant increase in his profits. Every rotten, frozen or under-grade potato that is loaded, and every potato spoiled while in transit or in storage, reduces the grower's profits and means a waste of time and labor. It also means a waste of time and labor for every person handling it, a waste of car space, and consequently it amounts to an appreciable loss to the community as a whole. The United States Department of Agriculture, through its markets inspec-

tion service, is trying to eliminate this waste. The original purpose of the markets inspection service was conceived to be a protection to the shipper. By a recent Act of Congress the inspection Law has been so amended that anyone with an interest in a shipment can ask for an inspection. If a shipper receives word that a shipment has been rejected by the consignee, he can wire the markets inspection office in designated markets asking for an inspection to determine the cause and justice of the rejection. The result, as was anticipated, has been the almost automatic elimination of unjust rejections. Knowing that an inspector is available to the shipper, a receiver who discovers that he has bought on a falling market does not feel so free to reject the shipments consigned to him. The mere establishment of the inspection service has almost done away with that practice.



Unloading Potatoes From Freight Car to Truck. Careful Handling is Essential From the Field to the Consumer.

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Faults Found in Shipments.
A second type of protection this service was designated to afford shippers was in settlement of claims made when shipments were received in bad condition. Inspections have demonstrated that the railroads often are responsible for losses, especially for freezing injury, and for troubles which may arise because of delay in transit. These results were expected, but to a surprising extent it has been found that the grower and shipper also are responsible, in that they often ship poor, under-grade, diseased potatoes.

Growers and shippers must be held responsible for much of the loss which results from shipping diseased potatoes, since a large portion of such losses can be controlled, if not entirely prevented, in the field. Serious damage results from careless handling when the potatoes are harvested. Too many people handle potatoes as though they were cobbles rather than a perishable pro-

duct. Even the breaking of the protective skin frequently proves serious. Such injury not only damages the appearance and necessitates deep paring of the tuber, but affords ready entrance to infection. Loss of this sort lies in every grower's and shipper's power to control. In grading potatoes too much dependence should not be put in sizing alone. A potato, for example, may be covered with second growth knobs that it will not pass through the meshes of the grader, but it does not rightly belong in the first grade. The knobs mean much waste and require extra time in preparing the

potato for the table. Or, a potato may measure up satisfactorily to the standards of size and yet be so diseased as to be worthless. A potato may even present a fine prize-winning appearance on the surface and be far below grade because of injur-

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ties or disease of which there is no evidence without cutting the tuber. Freezing injury, or hollow heart, illustrates cases of this kind. The grower should not be blamed for losses which result from these causes, but to a great extent field conditions are the primary cause of the troubles which appear when the potatoes are marketed.

In its study of shipments of potatoes on the principal markets, the inspection service finds that late blight tuber rot, which is frequently followed by slimy soft rot, causes heavy losses. This disease is apparent at the time of loading, and the bad tubers can be sorted out. There is no business economy in paying freight for shipping potatoes when rejection is a foregone conclusion.

Scab is another example of a gold disease which causes severe depreciation in the value of a crop of potatoes. The presence of a few scabby potatoes may lower the grade of an otherwise fancy lot. In some sections scab can be controlled by seed treatment, but in many cases careful grading will prevent scabby potatoes as well as those affected with wire-worm, white-grub, nematode and flea-beetle injury from reaching the market.

Other Troubles Cause Rejection.
Other field troubles, less apparent at the time of digging than these, often play a role in the rejection of

shipments. Among them are brown rot of southern potatoes, and the group of rots associated with fusarium wilt. During the winter the harvest losses are due to rots which start in wounds inflicted in digging, loading and hauling. These rots, known as fusarium tuber rots, are caused by fungi which live in the soil, and can attack tubers in any sort of break in the skin, whether caused by bruising, fork injury, jamming, freezing, or disease such as late blight tuber rot. These rots progress rapidly in storage and transit, and cause enormous losses.

Freezing due to improper loading or heating of cars is also very common. In warm weather, the greatest

losses are due to slimy soft rot, which is caused by certain bacteria attacking potato tissue which has

been killed by bruising, water-logging of the soil, scalding, freezing, or other causes.

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